

Scout hut housing plan which sparked objections withdrawn

Plans to demolish a scout hut next to a popular camp and build two houses have been withdrawn after attracting 65 objections.

The proposal to build two three bedroom houses on the land next to Borthwick Scout Campsite, beside Borthwick Castle, Midlothian, drew objections from the community council and an elected councillor amid concerns they were not compatible.

Moorfoot Community Council said it was aware of considerable opposition from Borthwick residents to the plans.

They said: "Having considered the application and read the various comments we strongly object.

"Borthwick has long been classed as a conservation area and an area of great landscape value. As such with respect to any buildings, special attention should be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of an area.

"These houses are modern in appearance and design, are two storeys high and do not conform to the council's general policy for rural housing – they are contrary to conservation standards.

"The proximity of the houses to the long-established scout

camp is likely to lead to neighbour issues for both parties concerning privacy and noise. The houses will overlook an area where young people are sleeping and taking part in activities.”

Councillor Peter Smaill recused himself from his role as an elected member and disclosed he was a partner of Borthwick Scout Campsite LLP, who own the land next to the proposed housing, as he lodged an objection as a private resident.

He said the council had signed a minute of agreement with the applicants when they were allowed to build a farmhouse on the neighbouring land in 2010 which set out that the remaining land around the house would be retained for agriculture.

And he said approving the new housing would require a ‘significant relaxation’ of the council’s policy when 14 years earlier.

However two letters of support received by Midlothian planners claimed the campsite itself was not well used and welcomed the houses.

One said: “I am shocked to read the nonsense that has been written about the scouts.

“I counted barely a dozen camps last year and several of those were not overnight stays. Those that were appeared to be from other parts of the country. The local scouts seem to have given up bothering about the place.”

The application, which was due to be considered at Midlothian planning committee in September, was withdrawn by the applicant this week with a request to planners for more details on the design issues ahead of a resubmission.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter